1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

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"Balla", after weeks of searching, a strong tree trunk is selected, after weeks of searching, to serve as center port for the new tuqul.

"Tequr enchät" (Pygeum Africanum), actually light red (lit. black wood), a porous hardwood, commonly available, which seasons well.

[278
589]

Rosewood, "Kosso" (Brayera anthelmintica) the search for which is a major occupation and livelihood of poor widows, since the bark and twigs are consumed against tapeworm. It is a heavy wood which can take a fine polish, thus more commonly used in noble homes. It is commonly available, at edge of "dega" upland forest.

"qarqaha", a bamboo of river valleys, can grow up to 5" in diameter, commonly used as major posts in tents of feudal lords during their military campaigns.

"yäbäraha shemäl" (bambusa abyssinica), lit. "bamboo of the jungle", a strong bamboo from the qolla lowland, traded from there in former times to serve as a staff for the spear; now used by shepherds as staff, and to fend off dogs, also for some simple furniture.

[778]

Male wood is also called "täbot enchät" because hardwood is used to make the tabot, the sacred tablet inscribed with the name of a church, placed in the inner sanctum, symbolizing the Ark of Moses in the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem.

824 313 Female woods ("enest enchat") are preferred and much more used than hardwoods, if the purposes permit, because they are more easily worked:

"Tod" (Juniperus Procera), or (Juniperus Phoenicoea) pencil cedar, is popular as a tall conifer, easy to split, moisture-resistent in rainy season, termite-resistent. It is one of the most important woods, and the only one of the traditional woods that is actually planted and protected by cut thornbushes against goats (which like to feed on the nursling). The grown tree resembles the cypress, and is the landmark of churches, churchyards and church schools. Thus the tree assumes a kind of sacredness, perhaps since pre-Christian times. In the tuqul it is often used as the horizontal, transversal beam. [778]

"Zigba" (Podocarpus elongata, or, Podocarpus gracilor) is a tall conifer of similar properties, with stringy, tough wood, used to make the alga bedsteads and other furniture.

"Ketketta" (Dodonea viscosa) is used for small carpentry, walking sticks; due to its slightly resinous but long-lasting qualities for torch parade at kasqal or wedding festivities. The leaves have household uses. [313]

"Qwara" (Erytrina tomentosa), used for slats in simple carpentry.

824 313 417 "Qenchub" bush, which resembles the euphorbia but grows at higher altitudes and is tougher, is cut and

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

A. The Structure of Church Organization.

346
778 a) The Church buildings and design.

The traditional church building is round, designed on a pattern of three concentric circles. This combines the round pattern of the African hut, though much larger in this case, with the functional design of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. Like the latter, each church has a Holy of Holies ("qeddesta qeddusan"), a closed inner sanctum, which may be entered only by upper priesthood
[782] or the day's officiating priest. He carries burning and smoking incense in a metal or clay censer, while he marches around the sacred wooden tablet, the "tabot", located there. On the tabot, which may not be seen by layman's eyes, are inscribed, in Geez, the name of the saint to whom the particular (parish) church is dedicated, plus magical names of angels and geometric symbolism and phrases from both the Old and New Testament. The "tabot" represents symbolically the Ark of Moses kept by the ancient Israelites in the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem

346 The second circumference, the "mäqdäs", can be
[788] seen from the outside through several doorless openings. Here the priests perform the eucharist, hidden from the public gaze by portable white linen screens. The "maqdas" is restricted only during services.

796 Within the third, walled-in circumference, the
346 "taza", called also "geñe mahlēt" (lit. reciting-place of devotional poetry), the chorister-scribes ("däbtära") congregate while they chant devotional poetry and other

beneath kneelength shirt ("qämis") and shamma; often they wear sandals. They usually let a full beard grow as richly as it will. Another private symbol of priestly nobility is an abbreviated "maqomya" leaning staff, shorter, without crutch, topped by an ivory knob and equiped as a walking stick, called "sände kahanat", with an iron point at the bottom.

In church parades, priests and deacons add colorfully embroidered garments of imported and embroidered velvet, rayon, silk, brocade, etc., often cut like the ancient leopard-skin in sleeveless capes which hang from the shoulders over front and back. If of domestic origin, the holy day garments are dyed black or red. Embroidery is of gold or silver thread, and sometimes includes gold or silver filigree plates in geometric patterns (e.g.the sun). On such occasions the ordinary sun umbrella ("jantela") of reeds gives way to a colorful umbrella of imported cloth, in which red and gold predominate. It is now often attached to the ribs of a modern umbrella. The black cape ("kaba") is held across the chest with a metal (often silver) clasp or chain.

On such holy day parades, clergy and upper-class persons married in a eucharistic ceremony ("qurban"), wear the metal crown, "akiil". This is one of the most valuable of each church's possessions, always locked in the church when not in use, usually donated by noble sponsors. They are usually made of silver, or at least of brass, and the older more traditiona ones are shaped in tiered stories of circles narrowing toward the top

293 story. Later ones imitate European crowns.
778 In parades tall crosses of bright metal are carried, Like most Abyssinian priestly hand crosses, they are so ornamented with further cross designs that they appear to the Abyssinian as "perforated"; hence the common expression "perforated as the cross" (where a Westerner would use the symbol of the sieve). Priests and monks always carry a handcross, which they hold out to a passing acquaintance to kiss, thepproper greeting toward clergy, even on ordinary days. Smaller crosses are [789] used by the public as amulets against evil spirits. The larger crosses, with their ornamental supports, forming perforated circles and squares, sometimes contain engra- [325] ved verses. The method of casting is the"cire perdue", which is also used to cast the concave tops of the "ma- [534] qomya" crutch. In front of old churches, resonant stones are suspended from poles, and when struck, act as bells to summon for the service.

778 Other metal church utensils include the censers in which incense is burned during the services, swung by the officiating priest. They may be of brass, silver, iron, even clay in poorer churches. They are often equipped with numerous small bells. Very common is [534] the sistrum, called "sänassel" (onomatopoetic), a rattle instrument reminscent of ancient Egypt, usually of brass, 8 inches long, with a straight wooden handle, the metal frame cast in "cire perdue", often by Falasha smiths. [177] The frame is perforated like a cross. The tinkling disks, which glide along the cross-wire between the sides of the frame

778 the frame, are now often cut from modern tin cans.

The ceremonial drinking cup used in the eucharist is the "ṭewa", usually made of metal. But if used in the "mäḥabber" communal sodality outside the church, it is often of horn or clay, about 4½ inches high, 5 inches diameter at top, 1½ inches at bottom. On the latter occasion it is filled with barley beer or "berz" (honey-water). This is given the peasant at plowing time to confer blessing upon him, thus called "marəs baggo" (for spring plowing). [788]

Other equipment belonging to the church may be a wooden pulpit for reading (not preaching), some tin oil-lamps or the old wick-like candles (called "twār"). [373] 778 Very important are the drums, huge affairs carried by 534 the younger dancers during worship, suspended from shoulder straps. The barrel-like "nägarit", of which the average church has three (or must borrow them), usually has a height of at least 30 inches, a diameter of 15 inches. It is made of "wanza" wood (olive or other hardwood), with tanned oxhide moistened and stretched tightly across both ends. The drummer operates it with the flat of his fingers and top of flat palm. Another type is the "kabaro" drum, in which one end is bigger than the other. The drums and the swaying maqomya sticks keep time during the chanting. Trumpets are used only for parades, to herald the march, but not in accompaniment.

778 When not in use, most of these utensils are lock-
344 ed in a little treasure house, called "bētalehem" (in
251

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

778 Geez). Here the bread and wine used in the eucharist are
346 prepared and stored with great secrecy. The utensils of
251 the nearby cooking hut, the baking pan "metad" and large clay jars for barley beer, are also stored here. Supplies of tyeff, barley, wheat, beans, peas, may also be stored.

779 In recent years, church parades feature prominant-
186 ly the flag of the nation, the red-green-yellow of the central government, emphasizing in modern ways the close union of church and state that has long been traditional in Abyssinia.

(e) Worship and Devotional Poetry.

533 The musical chants and notations studies formally
796 have already been outlined in connection with church education.

Church hymns, including devotional poetry, are called "qene" in a generic rather than specifically accurate sense. A collection of them is contained in the book "zubae qana", and they are sung in a special mode. The chief mode is called "selt". It has three variations:

(1) "geez" - short tones, dedicated to the "Father";
(2) "ezel" - mournful tones in minor key, dedicated to the "Son" 's passion;
(3) "araray" - long, drawn-out tones, dedicated to the "Holy Ghost".

These variations are interlaced, for special results, and for specific occasions. The mass, "qeddase" (lit. sanctification) is chanted in a mode bearing the

X794 not to cross the boundary in front of the stage again. He is not to
756 approach the house until well after nightfall, and is to come by a
123 back trail, so as not to be seen by passersby.

X794 Thus, after nightfall on the 23rd of the month of Yäkatit, he
796 climbed over eroded back trails down to the "Kokit" section of Addis
123 Aläm and approached the house of Lady Sälämtu where her devotees were assembled. It was 7:30 P.M. More oil lamps had been lit. There were about 20 women, but a male zar doctor with talents in poetry and chanting sat near the stage, wearing a white turban much like a Coptic Abyssinian priest. A powerful male drummer had been hired for the occasion.

X794 Lady Sälämtew still took no official notice of the foreigner, for
796 her zar had not yet "descended", and without that she was just a hollow
[123] shell, a mute "horse". One of her brothers motioned the foreigner politely to a seat on the mudbench that ringed the wall. There was much subdued whispering, as if a momentous event was about to take place. The hairdo of several of the women devotees and doctors had
[302] been specially arranged to honor their individual zars: those not permitted to cut their hair had plaited it into a braid ("surosh") surrounding the skull; others had shaved a circle in the middle (called "gucho"), like a little girl.

X794 Other preparations and paraphenalia included the ritual coffee
796 trays ("gända"), which symbolized the wooden"tabot" (sacred tablet)
778 of the holy Coptic city of Aksum, and which were dedicated to several zars including Säyfu Čhängär and Rahēlo. The ancient mother of many zars, named "Werär" was believed to have stolen the original "tabot"

from Aksum (just as Menelik I is regarded by the Coptic Abyssinians to have brought it to Aksum from Solomon's Holy of Holies at the temple in Jerusalem). But the tabot of the zars also symbolized the outdoor tree stump which serves the invisible zar spirits as a table. Thus, partaking of refreshments from the coffee trays constituted a kind of communion with the zar spirit to whom the tray was dedicated, although this was done only during intermissions of the cult services. On one tablet, the "araqi" supplied by the foreigner stood ready.

In the corners, more types of incense were burning than before. In addition to "etan" (frankincense), the domestic Ethiopian "bukbuka" was sending up clouds of perfumed smoke. Leaves of "wogart", believed pleasing to the zar that causes headaches and neuralgic pains, were occasionally placed on the clay incense burners. From time to time, some imported pebbles of yellow sulphur ("kabrē" or "din") sent up acrid smoke. But the sweet odor of most types of incense predominated most of the time.

About 8:30, the drummer brought his heavy drum down from beneath the solidly built roof, and began to drum slowly, rythmically, still subdued. The curtain was lowered, but the shadow of Lady Salamtew behind it could still be vaguely seen. Suddenly raucous grunts began to be heard from behind the curtain, emanating from Woyzäro Sälämtew. This meant that her first major zar had arrived, and was beginning to descend into her, performing the magical coitus. Her joyshouts became louder, higher-pitched, turning to shrieks, quicker and quicker. She was beginning to perform the "gurri" victory dance of the zar who had conquered her.

Immediately the women devotees began to handclap rythmically, gradually quickening their tempo, in time to the twisting and turning

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

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291

Church at Abo, Baressa gorge

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778
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Monk and deacon receiving offerings [Facing p. 170]

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

shortly before the Italian invasion of 1935, the first was accomplished peacefully; but not the second. According to the story told me, the *tabot* of the lower Ghiorghis had been borrowed and carried in solemn procession on the plateau in order to ward off a swarm of locusts which were damaging the crops there. This measure was successful, and the plateau people determined to keep the *tabot* which had proved itself so powerful. The people of the gorge would not agree, and tried to recapture their *tabot*. The plateau party however successfully defended it by force of arms, and later built a little church to house it. It was not unusual to attribute specific powers to *tabots*: for instance, that of Dimbaro Mariam (a little east of the north-east corner of the sheet) used to be carried to war by the emperors, attended by a retinue of priests and scribes, to bring success in battle.

The last church to be founded in these parts was the new St. Gabriel, on a prominent hill-top in the district of Dilila near the south-east corner of the sheet. I came upon it when first following the upper course of the Beressa in December 1946. As I approached the foot of the hill I learnt from passers-by that a new church had been built upon it, and that the foundress herself, a certain great lady from Addis Ababa, was at that moment on the hill. Climbing a rocky track to the top, I saw a cluster of new huts and the still unfinished building of the church. Nearby was a large canvas awning stretched rather clumsily between rough stone walls. Under the awning I found the lady herself, short and stout and genial, sitting on a camp chair; around her, squatting on the ground, was a deferential assembly of local dignitaries, personal retainers and priests. After the fluster caused by my unexpected arrival had died down, I had a talk with the worthy lady who, having just presided at a mid-day meal, now plied me with very welcome refreshment. She had been born and bred in this very place. Having spent most of her life elsewhere, and somehow acquired a certain amount of wealth, she had returned in later life to her place of birth and founded this church only the year before my visit. It met a need, she said, for the area lacked a church, and no other St. Gabriel existed anywhere in the neighbourhood. As it chanced, I had come on the day after St. Gabriel's annual festival (which is the 19th of Tahisas, or, in European style, the 28th of December). She expressed great regret that I had not been present at the festival itself, when big crowds had come from Debra Berhan and from all the surrounding country.

This incident seemed to me interesting as demonstrating the tenacity of the local religious tradition in Ethiopia. After all the upheaval and disruption of Italian occupation and the Second World War, the hold of the ancient Church over the Amhara people seemed unweakened. The Church was able to extend its influence in an area not yet well served as readily as ever. It was still an appropriate act for a pious person to found a new church in a lonely place. Perhaps these things are not surprising, for the Church has been the main support and inspiration of Ethiopian unity since the earliest Christian times. It has always been the focal centre of the national sentiment, the fount of renewed resistance to aggression, the main force, in fact, which has maintained Ethiopia's independence and made of it, as Menelik himself once said, an island of Christianity in the great Islamic sea.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

They say the prayers by heart and
without light, except in the lamps or chandeliers, for they have not got lamps. They burn butter in these chandeliers, for they have not got oil. They pray or chaunt very loud, without art of singing, and they do not recite (alternate) verses, but all sing straight on. Their prayers are psalms, and on feast days besides psalms they recite prose, according as the feast is so is the prose. They always stand in the churches; at matins they only say one single lesson: this is said by a priest or a friar, rather shouted than intoned, and he reads this lesson before the principal entrance. When this lesson is finished, on Saturdays, Sundays, and feast days, they make a procession with four or five crosses on their poles, and a cross not so much raised as carried like a stick in the left hand, because they carry a thurible in the right hand, since as many as carry a cross carry a thurible, there are always as many thuribles as crosses. They wear some silk cloaks, not well made, because they are not wider than the width of a piece of damask, or other silk from top to bottom. Before the breast, a cross piece to the flanks on each side, of any other stuff and of any colour, even though it should not match the principal part, and of this principal part a good ell hangs behind dragging on the ground. They make this procession through the circuit, which is like a cloister. This being ended, on the said Saturdays, Sundays, and feasts, he who has to say mass enters with two others into the chancel; they bring out an effigy of Our Lady, which they have in ancient pictures in all churches and monasteries. He who has to say mass places himself in the centre of the transept with his face towards the principal entrance, and the image in his hands held before his breast: and those who stand by his sides hold lighted candles in their hands, and all the others commence a chaunt like prose, and all walk, shouting and leaping as if dancing[1] they hold hands and go round, before the

[1] *Como em chacota*, dancing and singing, *i.e.*, not reverentially.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

792 thuribles of copper. When mass was said, I saw a great gold chalice and gold spoon, with which they administered the communion. Of the three hundred friars who came to this monastery, very few were those that I knew as belonging to it: and I asked some of my friends how it was, that with so large a number of friars in the monastery as they said, they were not present at such a feast. They told me that even though there were more than they had said, that they were scattered about in these monasteries and churches, and markets, to seek for their living, because that could not be in the monastery whilst they were young men; and when they were old men, and could not walk, they came to die in the monastery. On that day I saw the habit put on seventeen young men. There is a tomb in this 778 monastery which they say is of an Abba or provincial of 776 this monastery who is named Philip, and they give him the merits of a Saint, saying that there was a King Prester John who commanded that Saturday should not be observed in his kingdoms and lordships, and this Abba Philip went to that King Prester with his friars, and undertook to show how God had commanded that Saturday should be kept, and that whoever did not keep it should die by stoning, and that he would maintain this before all the fathers of Ethiopia: and he made it good before the King. Therefore 796 they say that he was a Saint for making Saturday to be 782 kept, and they treat him as a Saint, and they hold a feast for him every year, in the month of July, which they call *Castar* Philip, which means funeral or memorial of Philip.[1] On this account the people of this monastery are the most Judaizing of all the kingdoms of Prester John. I came twice to this Castar of Philip, at which they did me much honour, and they kill many cows at this feast. In one year they killed thirty, and in another year twenty-eight, and in

[1] *Castar* should be *Teskar*; Mansfield Parkyns calls it a sort of funereal feast, where charities are bestowed on the poor and the priests.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

784 He says that during all Passion week they are dressed in black or blue, and do not speak to one another for grief, saying that Judas by a kiss of peace betrayed his Lord.

532 784 Although there are in the churches effigies painted on all the walls, and also crosses, nevertheless on no cross is a crucifix painted, neither have they any of solid carving; because they say they are not deserving to see Christ crucified.

792 778 All the priests, friars, and gentlemen carry crosses in their hands, both on foot and on horseback; and the laymen of the people and lower people carry crosses round their necks. Every priest and friar carries a little horn of copper with holy water, and the hosts where they arrive beg of them water and a blessing, and they give it. Before they eat they throw drops of water on the food, and also in the drinking vases.

411 Their arms are assagays, few swords, a few shirts of mail, long and narrow; our Portuguese say that they are not of good mail.

There are many bows and arrows, they have no feathers like ours; there are very few helmets and casques. Those that there are have come since they have had intercourse with the Portuguese. There are plenty of strong bucklers;

713 there are no cannon, except two swivel guns which we brought them. At our departure there were fourteen muskets at Court, which they bought from the Turks who come there to trade. The Prester ordered whatever they asked to be given for them, and ordered men to be taught to shoot.

534 There are trumpets, but not good ones; there are many drums of copper which come from Cairo, and others of wood which have leather on both sides; there are tambourines like ours, and large cymbals which they sound. There are flutes and some instruments with chords, square like harps, which they call David moçanquo, which means the harp of David. They play these to the Prester, and not well.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

692 nishes all persons by that authority, even those of the Abuna's family, without any sort of deference paid to him; and this, as appears by the judges, or king's records, is of very ancient standing. The king calls an assembly of the clergy when he pleases, generally with the advice of the Abuna, and there is none considered legal if he is not present, if in the kingdom.

[682] Welled Hayrat (Ras Michael's son) was excommunicated for killing a refugee at the Abuna's feet, in consequence of which he confiscated the Abuna's villages in Tigre, nor was the curse ever taken off *. The Itchegue, or prior of the 693 monks, if he be chosen a lay-man, must be ordained by the 793 Abuna. He is named by the king, who nominates all superiors of monasteries. The Liku-cahanat, or chief of the priests, is ordained by the Abuna and Itchegue, who both hold a corner of a scarf put upon him. He is an inquisitor of morals among the priests, and has so much salt and cloth from each district. A priest at his ordination pays three salts to the Abuna. He comes to the house of the latter, enters, and kisses the threshold. The Abuna, sitting on a sofa at one end of the room, reads the Scriptures to himself. Then having paid his salt, the person retires and kisses the threshhold, returning without imposition of hands, or any ceremony. Old men are made priests, and young men deacons by a simple jussit. More probable accounts say, that there is only one salt paid, that the person stands at the door, while the Abuna, having made the sign of the cross, holding it in his hand, says, "I have ordained you a priest." The person then enters the room, kisses the cushion of the sofa, and retires. Many are ordained that can neither read nor write.

[764] The Abyssinians have an office for the dead; and worship
●778 pictures of saints, even such as are not consecrated. This we had an opportunity of seeing, every time we were obliged to draw some Madonna. All those that saw it, kissed the
000 ground before it, with their foreheads on the earth. The

* The Abuna's house is a kind of sanctuary, in which criminals are protected from massacre, not from trial. They are sometimes tried there by the royal judges, or dragged from it to the tribunal.

[p. 56]

6: Messing E-5 (1953-1954) 1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

AG-H quickly ducked behind a bush. He placed the purse in his *gäbäte*, the lengthwise half of a gourd which all travelers carry for mixing their ration of crushed linseed (called *shiro*) with water. He wrapped this in a piece of colorful imported silk that he had bought as a gift for his home church. Flattening the package as much as possible, he placed it on his head in the manner of the Abyssinian priests when they carry the *tabot*, the sacred tablet which is taken from the inner sanctum of the church to a pool of water on the day of the saint after whom the church is named. With his free hand he quickly folded his daytime toga in the manner of one going to church and borrowed the largest cross his companions were carrying. Holding it before him like a weapon, and looking serious, holy, and unafraid, AG-H led the caravan as he climbed up the trail in a slow, dignified manner.

When the bandits drew near, they bowed politely. AG-H stopped and gave them the cross to kiss. They asked respectfully to which saint his *tabot* had been consecrated. He replied with the most common one, *Qeddus Giyorgis* 'St. George.' Then they wanted to know which parish church it was from. By this time the old wit had returned to AG-H, and he answered: *"Yätalba masha Giyorgis"* 'St. George of the linseed-paste.'

The bandits nodded gravely and escorted him all the way up the escarpment, explaining that the area was dangerous and full of organized bandits. Some days later they learned how they had been fooled, and forever after they were on the lookout for AG-H on the banks of the Blue Nile.

Poetic Revenge. AG-H had spoken a candid truth once too often and was in official disgrace with Emperor Menelik. As usual, when miffed, he retired to Gondar.

But this time, having left Addis Ababa unofficially and quickly, his finances were low. Adding to his discomfiture was the news, brought to him by a friend from the capital some months later, that Menelik was amusing himself by telling stories of the misdeeds and follies of AG-H.

An idea of poetic revenge came to him. He instructed his friend to go to the Emperor and report that AG-H had died and that his kinsmen in Gondar were too poor to hold a fitting *tizkar*, a big memorial feast held forty days after death.

Empress Taitu was first to hear of the sudden death of her favorite. She promptly stormed into the chambers of Emperor Menelik, much as she had stormed into the battle of Adua against the Italians shortly before, riding with the troops of her own province. "You murderer," she shouted at the Emperor, "you broke his heart, you banned him from the court." She threw up her hands in misery, wailed as if a close kinsman had died, moving back and forth, chanting aloud about the goodness of the deceased. After a while this began to affect even the iron Menelik. At this point the messenger brought up the rest of his news, the *tizkar* problem. Menelik promptly gave him the huge sum of ten thousand thalers, to assuage his own feelings of guilt and to calm the Empress.

For a while AG-H enjoyed the fruits of his revenge back in Gondar. But he knew that he could not hide forever. Moreover, his generosity to kinsmen, neighbors, and transient monks was such that before long his money was gone.

So one day he reappeared in Addis Ababa. When he first approached the Empress, the stout woman almost fainted. She immediately sent a messenger to the Emperor. Unwilling to believe the news, he sent the messenger back to ask whether the Empress was feeling well. Thereupon, she took AG-H by the hand and stormed into Menelik's chamber. The Emperor was too shocked and surprised to be angry. He managed to inquire, "How is it that the dead arise from the grave?"

With a deep bow, AG-H replied: "Your Majesty, it is not uncommon in our Christian religion to arise from the dead" [alluding to the resurrection of Jesus].

Another version: While in disgrace, and living in Gondar, the newly-rich AG-H neglected his field, wasted his money and, toward the end of the rainy season, his wife and children were starving. So he sent his long-suffering wife to Addis Ababa with the false story of his death and need for *tizkar* money. Explaining his reappearance later, AG-H said, "Your Majesty, I so longed to see the faces of your Majesties again that I was not at peace in the earth and had to return."

A third version: "Your Majesty, they had so many rules and regulations up there [pointing to heaven] that I preferred to return and live under the rules of Your Majesty."

Sex On The Hill. Women are forgetful creatures. Sometimes they don't even remember that they don't wear trousers under their cotton skirts. One day AG-H was climbing up a steep trail in the company of men and women. A connoisseur of female flesh, he kept behind the women

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

main purpose, but of course they cannot be closed up. Ordinary umbrellas are never used by the Abyssinians, though huge and brilliant coloured umbrellas are used by priests and other important personages on ceremonial occasions.

On feast days the chiefs and other functionaries at Court change their cotton shirt for one of silk or satin, gorgeously embroidered in gold and silver, and in various colours. And finally a pelerine of bright-coloured cloth of velvet, or, better still, of lion or black leopard skin ornamented in silver and silver-gilt, is permitted to be worn by those only whom it is desired to distinguish on account of specially meritorious conduct, generally in war.

The full-dress costume of a Ras or Dejazmach, with bristling lion's mane head-dress, velvet cape with lion's mane collar, embroidered in gold and silver-gilt, and gala shield and sword-scabbard covered with velvet and embossed with silver-gilt ornamentation, is a really magnificent one, and the appearance of Dejazmach Nado, the envoy to King George in 1919, at Buckingham Palace in this dress caused quite a sensation.

Mention must also be made of one article which is an indispensable adjunct to the dress of every Christian Abyssinian, and that is the *matab*, a silken cord carrying an amulet or charm, which is worn round the neck as the badge of their faith.

The gentler sex affect as much jewellery of all sorts, bracelets, rings, anklets, necklaces, earrings, etc., as they are able to procure; these are of native make as already described. As a general rule they have extraordinarily small *attaches*, and of all the native bracelets that we collected in and round Addis Ababa none

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

the eye. Its beauty was not increased by the addition of a corrugated iron annexe for the purpose of seating some of the foreign guests at the Emperor's coronation.

The Abouna was good enough to arrange for us to visit the church, and we were received with ceremony by a number of priests, who were exceedingly kind and enabled us to make a thorough inspection, and even allowed us to take some photographs (which unfortunately, owing to the bad light, did not come out). They showed us everything with great enthusiasm and begged us to return "when a great feast was in progress". The building consists of three portions, a sort of outer gallery, an inner court, and finally the Holy Place or Holy of Holies, an inner chamber in the centre of the building in which rests the *Tabot* or representative of the Ark of the Covenant to which only the priests are allowed access.

The priests threw open the doors of the Holy Place for us to see in; it contained a kind of altar where the Sacraments are kept, and was surrounded by priests in very gorgeous vestments, burning incense and holding big crosses and crucifixes.

In one of the galleries a service was proceeding. Two priests were beating with their hands very big drums made of wood and hide; many others were shaking their curious little brass cymbals; and all were chanting, swaying their bodies, and slowly waving their praying-sticks. The time was really good, and the chant was rhythmic and tuneful, and not at all unmelodious.

The galleries were profusely decorated with huge life-size paintings depicting mainly scenes from the Scriptures, scenes from the life of Christ, the miracles, etc.; one dreadfully realistic picture of the Massacre

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

353 of the Innocents was very striking. There was also a
532 portrait of the Emperor Menelik, and of other noted characters in Abyssinian history; the likenesses of royal and other famous persons are frequently to be found on the walls or among the possessions of the principal churches.

• 778 In this connection an amusing incident is told by Stern. King Sehala Selassie had been given by Captain Harris' mission to the Court of Shoa, a portrait of Queen Victoria. This had been carefully guarded for many years amongst his treasures until his death, some time after which his successor, King Haile Malekot, presented it to the principal church at Ankober where the people used to flock on grand festivities to worship it as the representation of the Virgin Mary!

The *Tabot*, to which reference has been made, is the object of much veneration and has to be blessed or consecrated prior to being used in the particular church to which it is allocated. In one case the priest in charge of the church had committed a murder, and the *Tabot* had to be sent up to Addis to be reconsecrated before it could be used again.

796 The most prominent features of the practice of their
785 religion are the fasts, feasts, and pageants; and each of these is sufficiently remarkable. A very large part of the year—about 150 days—falls under the category of fast or feast, and both are strictly observed. During their fasts they are forbidden not only meat, but also butter and milk and eggs, and it is really surprising to see to what an extent this rigid abstinence is followed, especially as the fasting periods are lengthy, that prior to Easter lasting forty days.

For a day or so immediately prior to the main feast,

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

796 ments, whilst their shaggy little ponies curveted and plunged like mad things.

Dressed in his magnificent Abyssinian robes, carrying a modern rifle, and mounted on a wonderfully caparisoned black mule, Ras Tafari rode slowly up to the tent and took his seat on the throne surrounded by hundreds of gorgeously clad notables, and facing what was perhaps the most striking contingent of all, the priests, ranged on three sides of a square in front of the throne. Those on the opposite side of the square were all in white; those on the right and left wore robes of such dazzling colouring that in the sun's bright rays it almost hurt one's eyes to look at them. Red, blue, green, orange, purple, every imaginable colour, thickly covered with heavy gold and silver embroideries, and gold ornaments and head-dresses. And as if this orgy of colour were not enough, servants held scores of gaudy coloured gold-embroidered and much befringed and tasselled umbrellas over them.

796 778 534 Many of the priests carried magnificent crosses of gold and silver, others their long silver or ivory-handled praying-sticks, whilst some held various musical bell-like instruments, and about half a dozen managed large drums—things about three feet high made of silver with copper bands. Particularly striking were the dresses of ten young boys bearing golden crowns, symbolical of the ten commandments; while the *Tabots* brought from the neighbouring churches were very gorgeously bedecked. It was a wonderful and barbaric sight.

796 535 And then the Dance of the Priests began. Low chanting without music at first, followed by slow graceful movements of all their hundreds of arms in fine

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Perhaps this sort of disposition was not unrelated to the part Manz played in sparking the restoration of Amhara rule in Shoa, thereby preparing the way for the dramatic resurgence and expansion of the Ethiopian state at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Gondarē Ethos

The unique character of Gondar derives first of all from the fact that it was a city. During the whole period of Ethiopian history reviewed in this chapter, the Gondar period was the only time in which the emperors resided in a fixed capital, and Gondar was the only permanent population center that grew beyond the contours of a large village. As in ancient Egypt before the rise of Thebes, the concept of the city had played scarcely any role in the political thinking of the Amhara, and so anomalous was the rise of Gondar that Ludolphus, writing in the fifth decade after the founding of Gondar, could not believe stories that Gondar was a large city and predicted that "perhaps in a few years there will be nothing to be seen of it."[38]

Like many oriental cities, Gondar consisted more of a collection of small homogeneous societies than of a diffused heterogeneous urban population. The city was divided into several quarters, each of which lived its own life. The imperial compound was of course foremost of these. It contained the great complex of buildings erected during more than a hundred years, from Fāsil to Iyāsu II, and was the seat of affairs of state. The compound was separated from the rest of the city by a stone wall, whose twelve well-guarded gates each served a special function or class of people.[39]

The nobility resided in a quarter known as Gaing Bēt. Here the dwellings were spaced at comfortable distances, and nearly every house was surrounded by a garden. Abyssinians of lower rank lived in the more densely populated sections of Faras Bēt and Denkākē.

The Christian hierarchy had its own quarters. The *abuna*, an Egyptian monk appointed by the Coptic Patriarch at Alexandria as spiritual head of the Ethiopian Church, lived with his retinue in one sector.[40] Another area, Eçhagē Bēt, was reserved for the Amhara monk who served as administrative head of the Church. Each church compound, moreover, was the focus of another residential section, where its clergy kept their modest huts. The Eçhage Bēt and the church compounds were considered sanctuaries and thus, in theory at least, were secure from plunderers. The Gondarēs and wealthy people from the country used these areas as a safety vault for their valuables.

The ethnic groups which settled in Gondar had their respective ghettos. The Muslims lived in the lower part of the city adjacent to the river Qīha, which was convenient for their ritual ablutions. They were looked down on by the Christians, and meat slaughtered by one group would not be touched by the other. Poncet observed that when an Abyssinian met a Muslim in the

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*565 796 the long rains. Children go singing from house to house in small bands, or take bunches of wild flowers to relatives, in hopes of getting a bit of *dābo*. In most homes an animal is slaughtered—in some areas superstition decrees that it be a white-headed lamb or a red chicken—and there is much eating and drinking, the basic activity of every holiday.

A little more than two weeks later the much more important festival of Masqal is observed, celebrating the discovery of the true Cross by Empress Helena. By this time the heavy rains have subsided, and the air is filled with something of the spirit of spring. (Although Ethiopia lies north of the [132] equator the summer rainy season is known as "winter" because of its coldness.) The landscape is colored by acres of yellow wildflowers, which are cut and fastened to the poles each family brings to a central clearing where a huge bonfire is built. In late afternoon, after the tepee of poles has been constructed, the priests begin the ceremony by intoning appropriate chants. Then [554] each status group circles the poles three times, in honor of the Trinity—first the local lord, then the clergy, the lesser nobility, the peasant men, women, and finally the children. In the evening the festival takes a more secular turn. The bonfire is lit, and the young braves dance around it shouting their war chants. As the fire blazes on, these fellows seize burning brands and playfully hurl them at one another.

In November the monthly St. Michael's Day is honored with special celebrations. The peasants travel distances to attend the ceremonies at any [778] church consecrated to "Mikā'ēl." Holy water and hot springs sanctified by Mikā'ēl's name are drunk and bathed in by those with many kinds of disease. The rituals involve carrying the Mikā'ēl *tābot* ("holy ark") out of the church and elaborate chanting and dancing by the clergy. After the *tābot* has been returned, in a procession in which the laymen follow shouldering their rifles (undoubtedly spears in older times), folk dancing and singing go on until late [584] afternoon. This provides an occasion for the more enterprising adolescent male to spot a potential bride, about whom he may diffidently ask his father to make inquiries.

*565 796 526 Christmas, celebrated in early January, is marked chiefly by the playing of secular games. The common word for Christmas, *gannā*, is actually the name of an outdoors game played with sticks and a wooden puck. Played by boys, young men, and occasionally elders on the afternoon of Christmas Day, *gannā* is marked by a spirit of aggressive license. Accustomed norms of deference are held in abeyance. The game is played in so rough and disorderly a manner that it often results in broken limbs and scarred faces. Staged by two teams made up on the spot, *gannā* is concluded at dusk by volleys of abusive limericks with which the victors revile their adversaries.[4]

*565 796 This is the season for special festivities on saints' days. St. Gabriel is particularly honored in December, as are St. Mary, St. George, and again St. Michael

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

in January. But the giant of holidays in this season is Epiphany, about a fortnight after Christmas. The holiday commemorates the baptism of Jesus; the name of the holiday, *Ṭimqat*, means "baptism." In preparation for Ṭimqat new clothes are given to children and the adults' *shammā*, grown very gray over the months, are washed in every household.

The program for Ṭimqat is long and complicated. At sunset on the eve of the holiday, the people don their white clothes and repair to the local church, from whence they escort the *tābot* to a place where it will spend the night—near some stream or pool. They go home for supper, and return to that site for singing and dancing until late at night. About two o'clock in the morning Mass is performed, after which quantities of *dābo* and *ṭallā* are consumed. Toward dawn, or shortly after, the clergy bless the water and sprinkle it on those assembled. Many like to bathe in the sanctified water at this time. It is the occasion for baptizing the children of syphilitic mothers and those who want to be rebaptized.

By noon on Ṭimqat Day a large crowd has assembled at the ritual site, those who went home for a little sleep having returned, and the holy ark is escorted back to its church in colorful procession. The clergy, bearing robes and umbrellas of many hues, perform rollicking dances and songs; the elders march solemnly with their weapons, attended by middle-aged men singing a long-drawn, low-pitched *haaa hooo;* and the children run about with sticks and games. Dressed up in their finest, the women chatter excitedly on their one real day of freedom in the year. The young braves leap up and down in spirited dances, tirelessly repeating rhythmic songs. When the holy ark has been safely restored to its dwelling-place, everyone goes home for feasting. In the meantime, the eyes of gamesome men and women have met and secret rendezvous have been arranged.

Ṭimqat ushers in a season of weddings, which comes to an abrupt end with the onset of the great fast before Easter. For eight long weeks, body and spirit are depressed by the heavy fasting requirements. The mood reaches a climax in the final week of Lent. Then no heavy work is allowed, and the more devout peasants go to church many times and intensify their daily schedule of prayers. Total abstinence is practiced for the forty-eight hours preceding the final Mass, performed in the middle of the night before Easter.

Gluttony follows this long deprivation. It is a season of the highest spirits. For eight weeks the inexorable requirement to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays is waived. The bins are full with the harvest of wheat, barley, and chick-peas. New crops of pulse start to appear in the fields. It is the most favored time of all for weddings.

And then, as the Amhara themselves view it, June brings another time of sadness. With the onset of the heavy rains come attacks of malaria in the lowlands, typhus in the highlands. Swollen streams make travel difficult and

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

As for the beginning and end of the world, all Amhara believe that the world was created at one time by the will of God. When the eighth millennium arrives, moreover (A.D. 2508), God will bring about a major upheaval, either destroying the world completely or, as others believe, turning it upside down. According to the latter view, all those who live at that time will perish, while those who died first in the world's history will return to life, to a time of renewal, when a little grain will go a long way and the milk of one cow will nourish a multitude.

The Amhara peasant's view of nature is matter-of-fact. There are a few traces of animism, such as the association of certain kinds of trees with holy places and the belief that whatever is planted on the monthly commemoration of Christ's birth will dry up and die. There are a few touches of aesthetic appreciation, such as the peasant's wonderment over a remarkable view when it is thrust upon him and his desire, when feasible, to locate his home in an attractive locale. But there is certainly no idealization, religious or secular, of the great outdoors. The peasant much prefers to get out of the bright sunshine and rest in the dark, smoky interior of his hut. When he sits gazing over the hills and slopes of his gorgeous country, he is probably counting his livestock or noticing how the grain is growing.*

The Amhara peasant's life is so much a part of nature that he does not view it as a separate category of experience; there is no word for "nature" in his vocabulary. Nor is there a sense that the things of nature have minds or laws of their own. Nature is simply the passive agent of God's rewards and punishments; for example, the man who fails to keep the Orthodox fasts will find that his crops are ruined.

For his part, the peasant's adjustment to nature is a straightforward practical one. He has no drive to conquer or to be master over nature; he has no inclination to fuse or lose himself in nature; he has no need to keep nature in equilibrium through a system of rituals. His perception of natural objects is in terms of what will assist or hinder eking out a subsistence. The farm animals are his friends, and must be taken care of properly or else they will die and he will be without their help. The wild beasts are his enemies, and they must be guarded against or else they will eat his crops, his livestock, or himself. The fields must be plowed at the right time each year or the bins will become empty, and knowing the right time depends upon a sufficient knowledge of weather to judge the coming of the various kinds of rain.

Thus, the motif in the Amhara peasant's orientation toward nature is to get what one can out of what nature readily provides, neither neglecting one's responsibilities to keep things running as nature requires, nor inflicting any

* All the TAT respondents interpreted card No. 4, showing two men sitting on a ridge overlooking a natural panorama, in terms of taking care of the grazing animals and becoming wealthy.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*565 776 "If God wants me to, I may go to school; but it is hard to know what God will want."

*565 782 776 As a corollary of this outlook, the main way for man to achieve anything on earth is to pray to the Almighty. If one prays properly, God's power can be invoked to punish one's foes. In former times at least, the peasant went to church and prayed for vengeance, then expected his enemy to fall sick or die. If he could not pray effectively himself, he would give money to a priest and the latter would do the job for him. It is commonly believed by the Amhara peasantry today that their praying and fasting were a major factor in ridding the country of the Italian invaders.

*565 776 This conception of deity is at heart that of the early Old Testament, a powerful Lord who punishes, rewards, and avenges. But it is suffused with the pagan feeling for a plurality of deities. The Amhara is constantly aware of a number of supernatural beings other than *Egziābhēr* who affect his life for better or for worse.

Some of these are the simple agents of God in everyday affairs. Each individual receives at birth a pair of guardian angels of his own sex, one for daytime and one for night. They serve to protect him from accidents, sickness, and enemies. When some misfortune befalls a person, it is because God has ordered his guardian angels to neglect their duties.

More important are the many supernatural beings with wills of their own. Among the benevolent spirits the main figures are:

Miķā'ēl	The archangel Michael
Gabre'ēl	The archangel Gabriel
Giyorgis	St. George
Madhānē Alam	Savior of the World
Selassie	Trinity
Māryām	St. Mary
Abbo	Gabra Manfas Qeddus, an Abyssinian saint
Takla Hāymānot	Another Abyssinian saint

Most Amhara are particularly devoted to some one of these sacred figures. Partiality to one or another may be due to the fact that it is the patron saint of one's father, or represented in one's Christian name, or commemorated by the church in one's area. In time of sickness, a man will drink holy water [782] from the church of a certain saint, and make a vow, for example, "If Giyorgis cures me, I will give money to the church in his name, I will kill a lamb for him, and I will drink in a Giyorgis *māhebar* ("religious fraternal association") every month thereafter."

*565 778 These sacred figures are represented by numerous holy arks, or *tābot*. A *tābot* is a hollow oblong box containing some sacred script. It is identified

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

with the saint for whom it has been named, and personalized. The extent to which the ark is regarded as human is shown by the following remark of a peasant who looked at the picture of a church on a TAT card and explained: "When the ark has been given incense, it will be happy. . . . If this church is given a new roof, the ark will be very happy and give *Injarā* to the people."

The saints and the *tābot* which represent them are the objects of much veneration and prayer. They figure so prominently in the Amhara's outlook that at times they appear to be on a par with *Egziābhēr* himself. Two differences may be noted, however. The saints do not take the initiative in interfering in human affairs, as does *Egziābhēr*, but intervene only when appealed to. Their function, moreover, is that of protecting and healing spirits; it is not their portion to administer the punishments which *Egziābhēr* inflicts on those who disobey the religious laws, though they may mete out punishment to someone who breaks a vow he has made to them.

Malevolent spirits, on the other hand, do intervene in human affairs without being invited. Of the evil spirits, the devil—known as *Diabolos*, *Sayṭān*, or *Agannent*, which are names of different spirits to the learned but counted the same in the peasant's mind—is the most powerful. He is imagined as a dark, Negroid type, the least favored sort of racial stock in Ethiopia. He dwells in deep waters, woods, and caves, and likes to roam about at noon and at midnight, especially near dirty places. Amhara avoid going near a lake or pool known to harbor the devil, for fear of being pulled in and drowned. They likewise stay away from dirty places at noon, for fear that he will make them sick. The devil brings epileptic fits. He tries to push people into fire. He also tries to harm human beings by tempting them to some misdeed—stealing, murder, getting drunk—and then have them suffer the consequences. Finally, when the human soul appears for judgment after death, he strives to gain possession of the soul and put it into the fire. Sometimes he is pictured as chewing the souls he manages to obtain.

Despite his inimical gestures toward the human race, the devil is respected as well as feared, for he has much power. Many peasants pray to him for this reason. In time of sickness some choose *Sayṭān*, rather than (or in addition to] *Giyorgis* or *Māryām*, as the one to whom they pray and make promises. On New Year's Day, Christmas, and Easter, prayers to *Sayṭān* are surreptitiously repeated in many quarters. One of these prayers runs: "My lord, bring me through the year. Guard me. If you keep me this year in peace and bring me through the year, I will give you more." Certain individuals are on especially good terms with the devil. They pray to him often, and he visits them from time to time and does favors for them; they are his "friends." When such a person dies, his son often continues the relationship.

Another kind of spirit producing ill effects is the *zār*. *Zār* spirits are of

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

pia by a Muslim from the East—suggests a repetition of the Grāñ episode. Finally, there is the previously mentioned conception of the end of the world as a time of renewal, when those who died first will return to life and history will begin again.

Space, like time, is not regarded as an amoral and homogeneous continuum to be submitted to systematic measurement. Land is not something to be bought or sold at will, but belongs by right to a family, a church, or a ruling line. Land titles are defined loosely, by convention and approximation, and the Amhara peasantry have objected to attempts by the government to make exact measurements of their land. The reluctance to rationalize space is conspicuous even in the capital of Ethiopia, where to this day there are no street numbers, so that places can only be identified roughly as near a certain police station or past a certain hospital. Directions are indicated with difficulty. The points of the compass are almost never used, though there are words for the four directions. Instead, the vague terms for "up" and "down" serve to answer almost every question about location.

Though the peasants are often unclear about the precise boundaries of various place names in the countryside, they do know just where the several churches are located over a wide area. It is customary for them to locate a given place by reference to the nearest church. Thus they will say: "He lives below Abbo" or "We must travel above Mikā'ēl." As a result, locations in space are identified by the same set of co-ordinates as are events in time, namely, the names of the saints. Moreover, just as certain months each year are occasions for special celebrations in behalf of each sacred figure, so in the countryside certain churches are considered especially holy shrines. Thus, there is special veneration for *Ṭerr Māryām* ("St. Mary's Day in the month of Ṭerr") and Gishēn Māryām ("St. Mary's Church in the district of Gishēn").

The dominant configuration in the Amhara's experience of space is that of concentric circles. Whether or not we try to relate this to the cyclical organization of time, the fact remains that the pattern of a charged center surrounded by circles of decreasing significance recurs in the main areas of Amhara life.

It appears, first, in his architecture. The traditional peasant home is round, with a conical roof supported by a pole that rises in the center of the circle. This is the domestic inner sanctum, a room for eating and talking and getting warm by the fire. It is often separated by a circular partition from sections that serve for storage, cooking, and animals. The compound in which the home stands is surrounded in some regions by a stone or brush fence, a boundary that separates the residential kin group from the whole outside world.

This pattern is more fully developed in the churches, which are round like the huts but larger and contain two concentric circular partitions inside. The

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

holy ark stands in the center of the church, an area restricted to priests and deacons and consecrated to the performance of the Mass. The second circle is reserved for those few who are privileged to partake of Communion—young children and rare adults who have been married according to the church laws. The third circle is where ordinary people stand during the Mass and where the clergy sing and dance on special holidays. The church itself stands in a compound ringed by an outer wall, representing still another grade of ritual impurity. Those who have eaten before the Mass or have had sexual relations the night before are not supposed to enter the church at all, and must stand outside the outer wall during services.

This spatial pattern is likewise found in the arrangement of people out of doors. The outstanding instance of this is the traditional organization of the military camp of a *negus* or *ras*. In the center of the camp is the large, round tent of the chief, together with tents for the holy ark, high-ranking visitors, and supplies. Around this central area the commanding officers are stationed. They in turn are encircled by the tents of the cavalry. Beyond this ring, finally, is an outer circle composed of the huts of the common soldiery.

Spontaneous arrangements along this line appear during festivals. The person or persons who sing or dance are placed in the center and the spectators form a circle around them. During religious celebrations this circle consists of priests and *debtarā*. At some distance the laymen watch from an outer circle. Here, as in the home, church, and military camp, concentric circles serve to segregate people according to their place in some hierarchical order.

Society and Human Nature

The Amhara's conceptualization of the human order lends itself as a whole to being articulated in terms of patterns of concentricity and hierarchy. The sociological component of the Amhara peasant world view consists, on the one hand, of a series of notions centered on the individual self and his progressively wider groupings; and, on the other hand, of a series of distinctions which rank persons in accord with criteria of superior and inferior qualities.

The Amhara peasant tends to have a pronounced awareness of his personal ego. The boundaries of his person and property appear firmly marked in his mind and are more important to him than the boundaries of any of his social egos. He likes to live on his own land, at a good distance from neighbors. If he lives in a homestead with other relatives, he prefers to dwell in his own separate building. The Amhara's proverbial comment on the subject is that "Home and the grave are by oneself." He is sensitive about his personal belongings, quick to defend his rights, reluctant to accept suggestions, and inflammable over insults. His conception of the admirable

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

conventional Ge'ez honorific. Sanctity of the imperial office is an antique theme, deriving apparently from pagan ideas of divine kingship which were transplanted from South Arabia in the first millennium B.C. along with other aspects of Sabaean culture.[1] But the working ideology which has upheld this conception during the period of Amhara hegemony draws on Semitic motifs of later origin, motifs which received their classic formulation in the fourteenth century national epic, *Kebra Nagast* (*The Glory of Kings*).

The effect of the *Kebra Nagast* is to make the Ethiopian emperor both physical descendant and spiritual successor to the kings of Israel. The genealogical tie is argued by the legendary union of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, whose offspring, Menelik I, is held to have fathered the line of royalty which allegedly ruled at Aksum and was restored in the thirteenth century. The transfer of religious mission is shown both in a prophetic dream attributed to Solomon, in which God's favor passes from Israel to Ethiopia, and in the story of Menelik's theft from Jerusalem of the most sacred symbol of the Judaic mission, the Ark of the Covenant.* Furthermore, while at the time the *Kebra Nagast* was written the Ethiopian monarch was presented as a friendly cousin of the "king of Rome"—an echo of the sixth-century alliance between Caleb of Ethiopia and Justin I of Byzantium[2]—thereafter he came to be regarded as successor to the latter as well, and hence the sole defender of the true Christian faith.

The Ethiopians have elaborated on this exalted conception of their monarchy in other literary forms.[3] In royal chronicles and hymns of praise which span seven centuries, the emperors are celebrated for superlative beauty and superhuman powers. In splendor of countenance they are likened to the sun; in awesomeness of power, to the lion; in religious character and divine force, to the kings of Israel and, at times, to God Himself.

In life as well as in literature the person of the emperor was clad with an aura of sanctity. Ethiopian subjects have had to prostrate themselves and refrain from lifting their eyes in his presence. An analogous show of deference was expected when they received royal messages from afar; the recipient had to hear the message outside his home, standing, and naked above the waist.[4] The emperors rarely permitted themselves to be seen in public, and were often secluded by curtains while eating or drinking. They were not addressed directly, but through an interlocutor. Zar'a Yā'qob, whose officers were said to have kissed the earth each time they heard the sound of his voice, carried the demand for social distance so far that pages attached to his court were not permitted to have contact with anybody from outside, and were put to death if they dared to fraternize with local inhabitants.[5]

* The orthodox still maintain that the original ark containing the stone tablets of the Law is located at Aksum. It is symbolized by the *tābot* found in every Ethiopian church.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

builds a tiny thatch hut near the home of his tutor, wears ragged, unsheared sheepskins, and gets his meals by begging. He lives thus for a year or two, until he has mastered the fourteen varieties of chants used in the various masses, and perhaps special chants like the *Praise of Mary* (*Weddāsē Māryām*) which are sung on holidays.

The other, and more important, qualification for the priesthood is marriage according to the law of the church. After a deacon has been married in the customary manner and lived with his wife for at least forty days, their marriage must be solemnized by the celebration of the Eucharist. Thereafter he may not divorce her or remarry if she dies.

With these conditions satisfied, the candidate for priesthood may travel to the *abuna* and be ordained. He acquires thereby the power to bind and to absolve, and is granted full knowledge of the mysteries of the *tābot*. The new priest attaches himself to a church, and is given his share of the monthly assignments for conducting the Mass. This is his main responsibility, though as he grows older he will also acquire confessants to whom he will give advice and assign penances.

Apart from these duties, the life of an Abyssinian priest in many ways resembles that of his lay neighbors. He plows his fields and harvests his crops. He may do business at the markets, or add to his income by weaving. Perhaps the chief difference in his manner of life is the habit of spending time in the "gate of peace," a little building near the church where the clergy assemble after services for hours of drinking *ṭallā* and idle conversation.

In reward for his services—and this is normally the chief inducement to become a priest—the priest is given a share of the revenues in kind brought in from lands owned and managed by the church. He may also be given some land owned by the church to cultivate for himself. In addition, he receives gifts in kind from his confessants periodically, is entitled to take part in the various feasts to which priests are regularly invited, and is likely to receive some bequest from time to time.*

The insignia of the priest are modest, but they suffice to inform the stranger that here is a man to be shown special respect: a white turban wrapped around the head and a cross carried in the hand, to be kissed by all comers. Older priests often carry a fly-whisk made of horsehair, and a wicker sun umbrella.

Though there are devout and kindly men among them, the Ethiopian priests have never been particularly noted for their moral qualities. Often they are ungenerous and scheming, and ready to exploit their position at the expense of the laity. They are poorly educated in their own tradition, stuttering

* A sheep, or at least a sheepskin—insurance that the Memorial Mass will be properly performed on the fortieth day after the donor's death.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

and misreading sacred texts in a language they have never understood. They are notorious drinkers, so much so that a modern Ethiopian novelist has one of his characters, a priest, ask: "If one stops drinking, what else is left in this world?"[44]

Nevertheless, the prestige of the priests was unassailable in Amhara culture. Whatever their personal life, they represented the value of ritual sanctity, which made it possible for the Mass to be performed in the local churches. So long as they had been duly ordained and did not break their lawful marriage bond, they were part of a sacred class. Combes and Tamisier remarked upon this in the 1830's:

> Despite all their vices, these priests manage to make themselves respected; when they pass along the roads, the faithful bow deeply to them, and in no matter what gathering they appear, everyone rises and hurries to kiss their hands.[45]

Privileged contact with the sacred symbols of the church—ordination by the sacrosanct *abuna*, exclusive access to the *tābot*, and officiation at the Eucharist—gave the priests an authority that was independent both of political dispensation and of personal accomplishment.

Other groups within the clergy have been highly esteemed for quite different reasons. Those who become monks carry great weight because they embody the virtue of ascetic piety. The *dabtarā*, on the other hand, are respected for their erudition.

Monks usually come from two kinds of background: unwed deacons desiring to spend their lives as monks, and priests whose wives have died. But previous ecclesiastical connection is not necessary for the monastic calling, nor is the ability to read required. The essential qualification is the willingness to renounce the world. The word for becoming a monk (*manakwasa*) means to renounce earthly things. A prospective monk may be of the sort described by one of Walker's informants:

> An old man who has married many wives and divorced them one by one, may say, "Henceforth it suffices me! Let the world remain lost to me! I am to turn my face to God!"[46]

In earlier times the monastic life was sought by men from all walks of life, including lords, soldiers, even emperors, in consequence of some grievous affliction, or perhaps a vow made in time of trouble, or excessive *Weltschmerz*.

Heads of monasteries have the jurisdiction to confer the monastic status. One who desires this status bequeathes his worldly possessions and goes through a ceremony in the church in which his body is declared dead. The symbol of the monastic state is a little cloth skullcap (*asḳēma*). Once he has become a monk, an Ethiopian is a legal nonentity. This frees him from all

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

peoples who penetrated deep into the highlands, making many converts among the Christians. Even after the defeat of the Muslim armies in the sixteenth century and the subsequent rennaisance of the Ethiopian polity, relations with the Islamic world persisted, augmented now by the presence of Abyssinian Muslims permanently settled in the highlands.

Within the context of Ethiopian medicine, these widespread cultural affinities are most obvious in the works of the cleric healer (the debtera), and in the practices of the zar possession cult. For example, in their numerological operations, the debtera's divinatory texts repeat the gematria manipulations of the Kabbalah, while the ideology which rationalized these formulations clearly reiterates the astrological lore of Islamic savants. Similarly, affinities are obvious between Ethiopian and Islamic amulets, in their construction, in the design of talismanic devices, and in the ends for which they are manufactured. Nor is evidence of the translation of Islamic medical treatises into Ge'ez and Amharic lacking. Here, however, these works, particularly regarding humoral theory, have enjoyed only a very limited diffusion, and have been subordinated to indigenous medical notions. Finally, the zar cult, in whose coteries many of Begemder's women belong, is no local phenomenon, but appears in one form or another throughout this entire culture area.

751 758 the sunlight.[6] After the disease symptoms have disappeared, and the convalescent has regained his former vitality, some precautions may still be followed to prevent the return of the original syndrome, to which he [262] may have developed a vulnerability. For example, the former sickman may be forbidden to eat one or more of the foodstuffs which were included among the materia • [978] medica of his cure. Often, an amulet containing dried materia medica of the primary medicine is also worn.

*278 Pharmacological Combinations. In the abstract, Amhara pharmacology can be considered as a corpus of discrete and varied instructions for a) conserving the latent healing power of botanicals, and b) converting this power into therapeutically effective agents. Seen from this perspective, Amhara pharmacolog y has the potential for a large number of logically possible combinations of instructions, ranging from those with few directions of any kind, to combinations with elaborate instructions in each pharmacological category. Although, empirically, Amhara herbal therapies probably fall short of the potential number of combinations, the combinations charac-

[757] [834] [6]Primary syphilis, in particular, sets elaborate requirements---the removal of all hair from the body, head, and face; in addition, there is a period of abstinence from coitus.

Occasionally, an herbalist, particularly a medhaniyt awakiy, will utilise an apprentice as his medhaniyt korac. This is usually a close kinsman, a son or nephew, who has been taken to gather medicinals on previous occasions, and is thus familiar with their appearance and location. As an apprentice, he relieves the herbalist of the burden of gathering botanicals, which often involves trips to the hot and malarial lowlands. At the same time, the apprentice gradually becomes acquainted with various pharmacological details of the therapy.

No terminological distinction is made between herbalists who rely on a medhaniyt korac and those who do not. The client, in fact, is usually unaware of the situation in specific cases.

Classed together with other herbalists is the maker of herbal amulets, the kitab kitabiy. In most cases, the herbal amulet (kitab) is part of a complex therapy which includes, as a final step, the presentation to the sickman of a leather pouch containing a sample of all or some of the ingredients of the primary medicine. The amulet is worn around the neck, on the girdle, or fastened beneath an armpit. In this context, the amulet performs a prophylactic function, for it protects the now vulnerable client against a recurrence of the ailment. Certain of these therapists also provide these prophylactic amulets to clients who have never ahd the ailment in

*278 *759 • 778 [842] *[192] question. Finally, herbal amulets are used in at least one context, to end excessive post-partuitive hemhorrhaging (dem iketir), as the sole therapy. In the abstract, at least, a yidemiketir kitabiy whose therapy had proven efficacious could also be referred to as a yidemiketir medhaniyt awakiy.

*278 *759 Herbalists are also grouped by means of a second series of descriptive nomers. These names ostensibly distinguish herbalists according to the botanical ingredients of their primary medicines. Thus, the ise korac is a "green stem cutter", and the medhaniyt (or sir) kofariy is a "medicine (or root) digger". The final label is yi (disease name) medhaniyt korac, "the medicine cutter for the (designated) ailment", and refers to herbalists whose recipes incorporate a variety of medicaments, including non-botanical ingredients. Any one of these three types of herbalists may also be described as either a medhaniyt seci or medhaniyt ateci, according to criteria already discussed. Only the yi (disease name) medhaniyt korac, however, can---if he practices an appropriate therapy---be referred to as a medhaniyt awakiy. The practice of medhaniyt (or sir) kowfariy and ise korac therapies, is characterized by weak medicines; strong primary medicines, when used, are directed against non-serious ailments for which effective therapies are relatively common. In both cases, the

pain, loss of her senses, inability to move her limbs in an often fatal ailment known as sarakian. The midwife is powerless in these contingencies; instead, it is the herbalist or debtera who must be consulted. Thus, the sinj medhaniyt awakiy provides an infusion which the post-partuitive mother drinks to eject a recalcitrant afterbirth (sinj), and the yidemaketir kitabiy provides an herbal amulet to be tied around the waist of the female suffering from post-partum hemorrhaging (demaketir).

The cupper. The cupper (agamiy) assumes either of two therapeutic strategies, depending upon the ailment he is treating. Like the herbalist, he may attempt to draw the pathogenic substance out from the sickman's body. For severe headache (ras mitat: literally, head-gerifta), he shaves a circle of one inch diameter on the sickman's occiput, makes a single incision with a razor or other favored knife, places his cup of horn over the incision, sucks out a required number of hornfulls (usually three) of blood, and pours the blood into a waiting basin of water. The extruded blood is then examined for clotting (tikur waha: dark water) which is regarded as evidence that the pathogenic substance is being removed. Later that day, the agamiy returns to repeat his therapy. The occiput is chosen for bleeding because of its proximity to the body's blood reservoir (yidem sir), located at the nape.

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

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ized by a duration of only twenty-four hours from first prodromes to its termination, clients can be expected only from the parish and its immediate environs. Since clients of the herbalist's own parish are rarely expected to pay for any but the cure of a Medhaniyt Awakiy, the practice of this koruba therapy is likely to amount to little more than a modest presentation given by the herbalist.

In contrast, Nikersa:Kitabiy:A:I is a valuable therapy directed against a serious but not acute ailment. [778] This therapy consists of an amulet containing a variety of exotic materials, and of instructions for washing the affected area. The therapy was brought to Tikurmidir by Berey, the second wife of Asfow. Once Berey's eldest son, Gitahun, reached adolescence, his mother used him as her medhaniyt korac for gathering the amulet materials and as her apprentice in the manufacutre of the "pharmacologically" elaborate amulet container. Later, when Gitahun's own eldest son, Ayialuw, reached adolescence, he replaced his father as Berey's medhaniyt korac. After Berey's death, Gitahun, then in his fifties, began his practice of the nikersa therapy, retaining Ayialuw as medhaniyt korac and apprentice. Had the therapy addressed a more common ailment, it is likely that Gitahun would have begun practicing it prior to his mother's death, initially serving neighbors and kinsmen, while

12:Young' E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

addition, he blesses houses against ganels with readings from appropriate books of the Church, and sprinkles the house with water he has sanctified with his reading and spittle.

Finally, there is the largest category of students, those who choose the path of compromise and abinet. It is from their ranks that the debtera-healer emerges.

THE ABINET WORKS: PROPHYLAXIS AND THERAPY

Abinet are a class of recondite works directed at the satisfaction of some personal desire; their efficacy is obtained wholly or in large measure by invoking the assistance of super-humans (most often of the Church, but sometimes ganels), usually in contexts beyond those permitted by the Church. Abinet subjects include therapeutic performances (medhaniyt ina digam), and prophylactic amulets (kitab), divinatory texts (awdumigist), academic (timhirt) abinet, other inoffensive commercial works destructive works sending sickness and other misfortunes (kifat), and techniques for forcing the appearance and cooperation of ganels (ganel gelac).

Table eight indicates the constituent techniques of each category of abinet. The remaining paragraphs of this section consider those abinet works which address the therapeutic and prophylactic interests of the deb-

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

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TABLE 8

ABINET CATEGORIES AND ACTIVITIES

1. Abinet Categories

Key:

x=always present (x)=frequently present o=absent

	CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS					
	"Herbal Therapy"	Digam Read	Digam Write	Telsem	Manipulation of text	Other
Abinet						
A. Debtera therapy (preparation)	x	x	o	o	o	o
B. Kitab amulet (preparation)	(x)	(x)	x	x	o	o
C. Awdunigist divination	o	o	o	o	x	o
D. Academic abinet	(x)	(x)	o	o	o	o
E. Other commercial, inoffensive works	o	x	o	o	o	x
F. Kifat destructive works	o	x	o	o	o	x
G. Ganel-calling	o	x	o	o	o	x

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

DIVINING WITH AWDUNIGIST

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539 More than anything, it is the ability to manipulate awdunigist texts on behalf of a client that communicates a man's transition from an amulet writing student serving lowland peasants with a few simple kitabs, to a weak (tinis) debtera providing services to a highland
*[172] public. According to those debteras who have not accompanied him along the abinet path, such a debtera has now become a "tonkway", a "seer" classified together with the heterodoxical and despised balazar, tarnished by the proscribed manipulation of supernatural powers. These clerics consider the use of awdunigist objectionable,

• [178] [28]Written digams and kitabs are largely confined to contingencies for which the client carries the amulet on his person. A client's agricultural interests (for example, protection from locust, birds, and rodents), in contrast, are safeguarded otherwise. Here, the client's fields are often sprinkled with the debtera's infusion, over which digams have been read. In addition, a portion of the infusion is placed in a vessel and secreted among his fields, in order to secure sustained protection. Analogous abinet are worked for the client's other property interests (for example, safeguarding from theft).

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

from the debtera's perspective. Beginning with simple herbal remedies and ending with ganel pulling, the awakiy debtera's moral compromises are gradual and continuous. Although ganel pulling represents his only direct contact with demon helpers, his previous and continuing kifat performances make the debtera no stranger to the casuistry of ganel complicity. Beyond this, however, there is an important moral unity to the debtera's abinet works, whether they are produced by the power of divine beings or ganels. An abinet career is founded on a debtera's readiness to conceive of supernaturally derived power as a morally neutral commodity. As he exploits such power, he is constrained less by its intrinsic moral character than by its instrumental limitations. The debtera's accomplishment is to transmute the moral nature of the power he depends upon for his works. This he does by exerting his will over it, and directing it onto the objects and contingencies that he has selected.

Inviolability of Divine Power: The Atmakiy. The goodness (moges) of divine power is unblemished and its enjoyment is determined by divine will (yi'Igziyabiher yimozgin). The attitude of the pious man towards this will is supplicatory; towards this power, he is a passive recipient and a disinterested custodian. In a medical context, the atmakiy is exemplary. The atmakiy

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("baptizer") is a priest or monk who provides sanctified healing waters for sickmen. By reading from appropriate liturgical texts, any literate ecclesiastic can sanctify ordinary water drawn from a river, or the water of a spring (tebel) known to have divine curing powers. Sanctified common water is generally dispensed in the courtyard of a church, by a resident cleric serving as atmakiy for the occasion. No atmakiy has exclusive rights to the tebel at which he works, since he is only the representative of the church or monastery in whose parish the tebel is located. An atmakiy provides no medical services beyond dispensing sanctified water or overseeing the tebel. According to the atmakiy, as the sickman bathes, the divine fires of the water repel the ganels responsible for

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his ailment. The layman, however, does not conceive the effectiveness of these waters so narrowly, but sees them as the medium for a divine grace (moges) unbounded by specific etiological notions. Consequently, although sanctified waters are used most commonly against madness (ibidet) and epilepsy (ganel yazow), both caused by ganels, they are also applied against serious, chronic ailments with which ganels are not generally associated (e.g., leprosy). Usually the sickman turns to sanctified waters as a last resort, after he has exhausted all other therapies he can afford. A sickman continues to bathe with the waters of a single church or tebel, until he has

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

*755 *778 823 obtained a remission of his symptoms, or concedes that these particular waters are inadequate to his special needs. Tebel waters are much stronger than ordinary water, therapeutic failure with common water is generally followed with baths at a nearby tebel. Should the sickman likewise fail to obtain a cure here, often he journeys out to test the famous tebel springs about which he learns along the way. Some springs are known to be particularly effective against specific ailments, but, laymen are generally uncertain whether the effects of sanctified waters are cumulative or whether it is the divine grace of a single tebel that a sickman must seek.[39]

*756 *793 Manipulation of Divine Power: The Debtera. In contrast, the debtera's attitude towards divine power and divine will is largely manipulative, in spite of his supplicatory recitations. He works to abstract this power (through the mechanical application of verbal formulae, augmented by asmat), concentrate it (though the non-verbal elaborations of his abinet), and direct it (according to the demands of commerce and the indica-

[39] Occasionally, the sickman responds to a tebel with convulsive behavior, as the ganel afflicting him agonizes about.

734 [735] [823] [778] his hamlet to become a mendicant, begging from alms-givers at the gates of large and famous churches. Even the sickman whose economic circumstances enable him to remain at home may depart, to seek an efficacious tebel spring, once locally available therapies prove ineffective.

*763 734 Among the ailments of this category, leprosy is considered particularly loathsome. In the abstract, it is associated with a hereditary vector; in practice, the leper's neighbors fear contact with him, and the sickman who remains at home is physically segregated in a hut of [582] [164] his own, away from other residents of the hamlet. Because marriages are difficult to arrange for the primary relatives of lepers, the son of a leper frequently chooses to move away from the paternal hamlet to some place where his family's affliction is unknown.

*753 The absence of more profound moral consequences for either category of ailment can be explained, first, by the fact that associations existing between the sickman and sanction-wielding supernaturals are unaffected by either illness or cure, since these maladies are linked to non-purposive pathogenic agencies, such as gerifta and likift. Further, effective cures are either secular, [755] [757] and thus require the therapeutic assistance of no [778] sanction-wielding supernaturals, or, in the case of tebel therapies, rely on only the socially sanctioned supernaturals of the Church.